

# **Stormwater Program Review**

## **Focus Group Notes**

Name: Anne Gelbmann (note taker); Kris Van Amber (facilitator); Edwin Balcos (listener, themer); Wendy Turri (host); Don Jakes

Date: 9/13/07

Time: 1:30 – 3:30

Location: MPCA, Rochester

Attendees: Barb Huberty, City of Rochester; Troy Hollasch, MnDOT; Tom Hexum, Hexum Company; Bruce Schuhmacher, POET Bio Refining; Diane Benjamin, McGhie & Betts; Pat Bailey, Winona County; Kraig Durst, Rochester Service Company; Larry Frank, ArCon Development; Brenda Dicken, Rochester Township; Andy Masterpole, McGhie & Betts; Ivo Lopez, Bonestroo.

\*Note taker: Please write down common themes that you hear. We don't want you to transcribe the conversation.

1. React to this vision statement about stormwater management. It is apparent from the statement it will take all of our efforts to accomplish. Hard to argue with statement-we all want clean water as our goal. What does "reasonable" and quality mean? Think bigger-get outside the box – think of Stockton & Rushford flood. Need to integrate holistically how we manage water in all programs-need to consider topography, soils. Is the recent flooding going to be more frequent-are there ways to be more proactive? Words like "all", "high quality"-think about economics-what gives the biggest environmental benefits and has the biggest impact? Identify priorities for future generations. People don't understand it –they aren't educated enough to know they should sweep their streets-there is a need for more education to the masses-start in schools. Companies such as WalMart understand it, but not the smaller companies. Need cost-benefit. Need sense of ownership- "I as a citizen of MN can do...." What can citizens do-they need to understand their responsibility for clean water in MN. (See vision for Stormwater education workgroup) Economics is a consideration- no way to manage Stormwater that occurred in the flood-need ways to manage more common occurrences of Stormwater. 100 year Stormwater can't be managed. What is reasonable-term is ambiguous. Vision statement should be more specific. Need to personalize it. You can't deny that occurrences are more frequent-global warming....100 year event is no longer relevant. What about the term "high quality"-it's fuzzy-can't get specific to satisfy everyone's vision. Educate all people-not just permittees-average citizens-how can they prevent Stormwater pollution-pick up sand, redirect downspouts, etc. Soil is not valued-too much is going down the storm drains. We need to value soil more.

2. As you consider Stormwater management in Minnesota, what is going well that you wouldn't want to change/lose? Streets are cleaner in developments. Going to developers and educating them-they are doing things they didn't do 15 years ago. Getting to the most critical people first. Having a permit forces you to pay attention-have had to allocate resources. Water is cleaner now-aren't monitoring it, but people say that's its cleaner. Stormwater pond is controlling phosphorus and sediment and flooding. Ponds are looking better-being maintained. MPCA Stormwater manual is positive-mimic natural systems is a better way to go. RCTC's parking lot is green. No incentive for "green" practices. Celebrate rainwater and treat it as something good. The Stormwater management program has engaged lots of people that wouldn't have been engaged-more participation. Stormwater fees have increased awareness. Playing fields should be leveled-same standards should apply for Rochester as they do for the townships and smaller cities. Rochester won the Lotto with the most recent flooding event due to its Stormwater management-needs to be duplicated in other parts of southern MN. The infrastructure saved them thousands/millions of dollars. Topography in Winona is different. It's difficult to have a level playing field-in some communities there aren't people to provide the service for the permit fee-limited staff-why should someone pay for something when they aren't getting anything for it?

3. What currently is not working the way you would like or what issues /opportunities. Needs to be a review of the SWPPP so that there is some awareness of glaring issues such as staff at MPCA-erosion & sediment control professionals (dirt Nazis), etc. It's too complex-need to simply with respect to the permits-keep your dirt and garbage on site so that it will be kept on site during a major rain event. Rochester prefers their checklist-has more implementation in mind. SWPPP's shouldn't cost so much-too conservative. 80/20 rule-get 80% done right, then on 20% that could be done. Rochester has inspectors that inspect roads, sewers-they added Stormwater to their duties and an enforcement program. Smaller communities don't have inspectors. Give examples of how communities integrate (i.e. wetlands)-don't create new infrastructure-use existing institutions and organizations. Have PCA be director, trickle down to the county, then to the city. Clone MPCA staff that are proactive and user friendly. Inlet protection doesn't make sense-don't spend money to protect catch basins. Need to be result oriented-are we keeping the soil in place? MPCA's compliance is too difficult for the normal person-normal person reads at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level-farmers can't understand so they defer to consultants. Simply the process. No inspections in the township-city should send someone out to inspect. Subdivision registration-at some point cities will assume responsibility-MPCA doesn't trust cities to take responsibility. MPCA don't want to turn things over to the cities-fear?? Cities want to do it their way-as long as it achieves the same results. Solve the problem on site. Rochester guys will do anything to help you solve problems. Development as a designer-groundwater and drinking water-series of detention ponds-practice low impact development-difficult to implement LID when you have a regional pond-piping and ponding mentality. LID and pipes & ponds are not incompatible-you can still do LID for water quality and small storms. Regional ponds affect bigger storms. Still need ponds for 100+ yr storms-they complement each other. No incentives for LID. City wants to maintain open space for infiltration. Is water in ponds infiltrating to groundwater? LID-extra cost-why would a developer put in a rain garden-no incentive, but additional cost. There should be credits for LID-rebate-make

pond smaller? Needs to be flood management (ponds) and Stormwater management (LID). Need to consider trout stream management- not enough information for managing Stormwater in trout streams-maintaining temperature. Needs to be more education on infiltration (LID) for trout stream areas. MN Dept of Health says infiltration isn't good for karst areas. Program is young-everyone is in silos-need to come together. EDUCATION to developers, suppliers, contractors-if everyone was aware it would help. There are conflicting programs/permits-counties have standards, watersheds have different standards, cities have different standards. State is in micro management mode-what if scenario-will lose long term benefit-outcome needs to be the same for everyone and LUG needs to figure out to get there. Focus has been on new development-there aren't enough resources to fix old pre-existing problems. Need to modify behavior so that same mistakes don't happen. What do we do to fix the old stuff? Use DNR's natural resource planning-look at what you need to preserve first-use NEMO more-gets you in bigger planning mode-who should do this? We plan parking for the worst possible shopping event-ocean of blacktop-ridiculous planning-there should be a cap on parking. Archaic planning & zoning codes allows 5:1 parking-conflicts with environmental goals. Yesterday's rules play in today's market-dollars are going to the wrong area. Government can't react fast enough. Government can write standards that are outcome oriented. Need cohesiveness in government-planners need to be involved. Townships need to follow county guidelines, but they have a smaller footprint-narrower streets, less paved roads. Townships don't have time to inspect-they don't own Stormwater ponds (homeowners and developers do), but they have to write BMP's. Township ordinance requires green space-allows developer to protect environmentally sensitive areas. People won't show up for education meetings. Use example of how to take care of septic systems-do something similar for Stormwater for homeowners-make it simple-urban versus rural-do's and don't's. MnDot has construction projects and have gone well-biggest problem is dealing with existing roads and new developments. MnDot has done good housekeeping-less sand, etc. but could do more to reduce impervious cover on road surfaces. System is too complex; it's difficult for a trained engineer, let alone a township chair. Who is responsible for what? Too many layers of government. PCA staff are too concerned about getting fined instead of fixing the situation. Permits conflict. PCA should be aware of karst topography (Decorah Edge) in SE MN-standards may not make sense in this part of the state.

4. What didn't we ask you that you want to tell us? Huge area of non point source pollution that is not addressed by permits. Lots of unpermitted Stormwater that needs to be addressed.